

Q7 – Executive Summary

The United States has a significant number of government and contract personnel serving in all regions of the world, in many cases accompanied by their family. Their success in serving our country is greatly enhanced by ensuring that their family's needs are met, especially in relation to the education of their children. In many cases, options are limited by location and available outside resources. Home schooling is an increasingly appealing option for these families: it provides a consistent educational program for their children, avoids the upheaval caused when transferring to a new location every few years, and in some cases is necessary to keep their children safe in a foreign country. For those that home school their children, the challenges are many and often the cost is great. Many feel isolated and unable to provide education that is comparable to the traditional "brick and mortar" school that is freely provided to children in the United States.

Those American families serving overseas who choose to home school their children do not have access to broadband-enhanced education because the sponsoring agencies (Department of Defense and Department of State) currently do not reimburse for computer equipment or broadband access. Therefore, the families simply teach their children the way that they were taught and fail to use the technological tools that their children will need to succeed and contribute to our society. Broadband access is critical to the education of these children because it provides real-time access to educational and home schooling experts, instruction provided online, training videos, video and voice contact with other homeschoolers, learning collaboration, and a window to the world beyond that of their immediate neighborhood.

High speed connectivity along with quality hardware and software makes it possible to bring highly-qualified teachers and cutting-edge curriculum to students no matter their location. Innovative use of broadband technology will allow us to partner closely with these home schooling families, virtually being in the same room with them although they live many miles away. IDEA International (IDEA) will not only provide broadband access, but will utilize this access in virtually every facet of our program, demonstrating the superior education afforded through broadband and indeed how it will enhance every aspect of the lives of these American families serving abroad. IDEA provides a proven platform for broadband delivery of needed educational tools, helping these families prepare their children for *their* future, instead of *their parent's* past.

IDEA proposes to expand its current distance learning service to children of American families serving abroad, enhancing their education through broadband technology. IDEA's goal is two-fold. The first part of our goal is to increase awareness and demand for broadband services among these Americans serving abroad. This demand will facilitate accomplishing IDEA's broader goal of demonstrating to the Departments of Defense and State that broadband can greatly enhance the education of the homeschooled children for whom they are responsible, to bring about a change in their policies regarding these expenses. This would enable the program to continue and become self-sustaining.

Our target audience is U.S. Military, Foreign Service, and Contract Civilians stationed outside of the United States. We have a military presence in 156 countries and there are 318 U.S.

Embassies, Consulates, and Diplomatic Missions located around the world, most of which allow families to accompany the serving spouse.

IDEA is exceptionally qualified to provide an exceptional educational program through broadband technology. IDEA is a sister organization to the Galena City School District's distance education program that successfully serves over 3,500 homeschool students throughout Alaska. The technology, educational systems, and support staff are immediately available for use from the Galena City School District allowing us the ability to ramp up our operation rapidly. The current director of Galena's statewide program will implement the IDEA International program for this grant. All key personnel are available to fully implement the program.

IDEA International was initially formed in October 2000 to provide a similar home school support program (project completed) for American military families serving in a few countries in Asia. Standardized testing indicated that IDEA students performed above the national average in Reading, Language Arts, Math, Science and Social Studies, including annual growth in all subject areas tested. IDEA was first accredited by the Northwest Association of School on January 9, 2004, following a comprehensive review. This national accreditation represents IDEA's commitment to excellence. It also insures transferability and acceptance of credits at other schools, colleges and Universities.

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